

IN THE CLAIMS – Following is the list of claims and their status:

1.-43. (Cancelled)

44. (Withdrawn) A device for manufacturing an object of glass with a three-dimensional figurine enclosed therein, comprising a mold provided with a mold cavity, whose shape corresponds at least substantially to the shape of the object, wherein said mold is provided with an insertion hole extending between the mold cavity and the environment of the mold, which is used for introducing the figurine into the mold cavity.

45. (Withdrawn) The device according to claim 44, wherein the mold is so designed that holes having varying diameters, which connect to the mold cavity, can be formed therein.

46. (Withdrawn) The device according to claim 44, wherein said mold comprises a stamp and a number of bottom molds, which bottom molds each include a hole connecting to the mold cavity, wherein the various holes have varying diameters.

47. (Withdrawn) The device according to claim 44, comprising a vacuum system for generating a vacuum in and around the mold, at least upon insertion of the figurine into the glass mass in the mold.

48. (NEW) A mass production method for manufacturing successive spherical glass articles, in each of which is accommodated a three-dimensional object or figurine, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) providing a container with a mass of molten glass, the container including a discharge opening through which liquid glass can be delivered;

(b) providing a plurality of thermally resistant figurines; and

(c) repeating the following steps (d)-(h) for successively enclosing a figurine in glass;

(d) dividing the liquid glass delivered via the discharge opening into successive portions;

(e) guiding the portions into a mold;

(f) wholly enclosing at least one figurine on or at least partially in the portion of glass guided into the mold, thereby forming a glass mass with the at least one figurine enclosed therein;

(g) removing the formed glass mass from the mold; and

(h) modeling the mass to a spherical form by omnidirectional rolling for a time, together with simultaneous cooling, such that the mass solidifies and forms the spherical article.

49. (NEW) The method of claim 48, wherein the figurines are preheated.

50. (NEW) The method of claim 48, further comprising the steps of:
providing a mold with a substantially hemispherical bottom, and a substantially hemispherical cover for placing on and removing therefrom;
pouring a first portion of glass onto the bottom;
placing the cover thereon and pressing the enclosed portion of glass; and
removing the cover.

51. (NEW) The method of claim 50, further comprising the step of providing a plurality of concave rollers, together which bound a round passage opening.

52. (NEW) The method of claim 51, wherein the rollers include partially spherical cavities for co-acting in register positions during rotation.

53. (NEW) The method of claim 50, further comprising the step of pouring a second portion of glass onto the first portion of glass and the figurine.

54. (NEW) The method of claim 48, wherein cooling of the spherical article takes place by progressing the article through a temperature path from an annealing temperature to a strain temperature, such that cooling occurs in a substantially stress-free manner.

55. (NEW) The method of claim 54, further comprising the steps of:
additionally annealing the article by fully heating the form to remove internal stresses; and
subsequently and slowly cooling the article.

56. (NEW) The method of claim 55, wherein the article is slowly cooled to about 50°C.

57. (NEW) The method of claim 48, further comprising the division step (d) is performed by cutting through the glass flow between two figurines.

58. (NEW) The method of claim 57, wherein the cutting occurs by use of two plates having co-acting, generally concave and substantially V-shaped cutting edges.

59. (NEW) The method of claim 48, wherein the modeling step (h) is performed by a first roller having a recessed helical groove with a smooth, round form, wherein the roller is rotatable at a first peripheral speed and co-acts with a second roller rotatable at a second peripheral speed differing from the first peripheral speed, wherein the second roller is smooth, provided with a helical groove, or any combination thereof.

60. (NEW) The method of claim 48, in step (e), the portions are guided continuously into the mold.

61. (NEW) The method of claim 48, wherein, in steps (d)-(h), the portions are guided into a mold, which comprises one of a plurality of molds for successively holding successive glass portions therein.

62. (NEW) The method of claim 61, wherein steps (d) and (e) are repeated for a plurality of molds prior to steps (f)-(h).

63. (NEW) The method of claim 48, wherein in step (e), the method further comprises the step of delivering the portion of glass from two sides to the mold to thereby enclose the at least one figurine therein.

64. (NEW) A spherical glass article obtained by applying the method of claim 48.

65. (NEW) A method of manufacturing an object of glass with at least one three-dimensional figurine enclosed therein, the method comprising the steps of:

introducing a portion of glass into a mold cavity of a mold, the glass having a desired temperature at which the glass is soft;

discharging or placing a heated figurine into the glass; and

pressing the portion of glass with the figurine therein substantially into a desired shape.

66. (NEW) The method of claim 65, wherein the temperature of the heated figurine upon being inserted into the glass is higher than the temperature of the glass.

67. (NEW) The method of claim 65, wherein the mold includes a cover and a plurality of bottoms for forming the object.

68. (NEW) The method of claim 65, further comprising the steps of:
removing the object from the mold cavity;
placing the object on a roller;
shaping the object; and
polishing the object.

69. (NEW) The method of claim 68, wherein the polishing step is
effected by flame polishing the object.

70. (NEW) The method of claim 65, further comprising the steps of:
removing the object from the mold cavity;
at least partially reheating the object;
placing the object on a roller;
shaping the object; and
polishing the object.

71. (NEW) The method of claim 70, wherein the polishing step is
effected by flame polishing the object.